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Attorney General Biden and the Delaware State Police announce indictments following investigation of home improvement scam targeting senior citizens

Wilmington – Attorney General Joseph R. Biden, III and the Delaware State Police announced today that a New Castle County Grand Jury indicted Henry Forrest of Selbyville, Delaware and Theodore M. Forrest of Bear, Delaware for Home Improvement Fraud and Conspiracy.

“The Delaware law enforcement community is taking action to protect the senior citizens victimized in coordinated and criminal home improvement scams,” Attorney General Biden stated.

On May 7, 2007, The Delaware Department of Justice was first contacted by State Representative Gerald Hocker who reported that an Ocean View area resident was being scammed. The Department’s Consumer Protection Unit opened an investigation which revealed that on May 3, 2007 an 88-year old homeowner paid the suspects to power wash his roof. After beginning their work the suspects advised the victim that additional work was required. After completion of the work the suspects reported that the repairs would cost \$4,100 rather than the \$1,300 previously agreed upon. A home inspector from American Home Inspections Technologies later determined that the suspects failed to do any of the work the victim paid to have completed.

The investigation revealed three additional acts of fraud allegedly committed by the suspects:

- On May 4, 2007, during an unsolicited visit with an 82-year old Ocean View area resident, suspect Henry Forrest offered to clean and repair the victim’s roof and power wash the victim’s home for \$750.00. After beginning their work, the suspects reported further damage that could be repaired for an additional \$2,200. The victim wrote a check to Henry Forrest, who cashed it using a Virginia driver’s license at a bank in Clarksville, Delaware.
- On March 28, 2007, a 66-year-old Dagsboro resident responded to a card Theodore Forrest left at the residence. Forrest provided a price to power wash and seal the victim’s roof and power wash and stain the home. After beginning the work, Forrest reported chimney damage requiring repairs. The victim advised Forrest to complete the work. But, after noticing substandard workmanship, the victim directed the work to stop. Forrest insisted the work was complete and demanded \$6,050 payment which the victim provided. A home inspector later found that none of the work had been completed.

- On July 26, 2006, during an unsolicited visit with an 88-year-old Lewes area resident, Theodore Forrest claimed that he could make the home's roof look like new for \$500 using a rubberized protective solution. A worker mixed seven bags of powder with the assistance of the victim and applied it to the roof. Afterwards, Forrest added a \$1,500 charge, arguing seventeen bags of powder were required. After the victim insisted that seven bags were used Forrest agreed to a total charge of \$1,380 if paid immediately. After the next rainfall, the victim discovered multiple leaks from the roof.

As a result of the investigation, the Delaware Department of Justice and the Delaware State Police believe that the additional damage the suspects reported in these cases was created by the suspects themselves. Investigators believe that the suspects then power washed water onto the damaged area to allow water to leak into the houses.

After completing its initial investigation in early August, the Department of Justice contacted the Delaware State Police. Detective J.S. Evans in the Financial Crimes Unit at Troop 4 was assigned to the case and the investigation continued. As a result of the joint investigation a grand jury indicted the two known suspects, Henry Forrest and Theodore M. Forrest, on August 27, 2007.

On September 4, 2007 Delaware State Police detectives arrested Henry Forrest, of Selbyville, Delaware at his home without incident. He was charged with two counts of Home Improvement Fraud, two counts of Felony theft, and two counts of Conspiracy Second Degree. He was arraigned and released on \$6,000 unsecured bond.

The indictment also charges Theodore M. Forrest, also known as Edward Powers, of Bear, Delaware. Theodore M. Forrest is charged with four counts of Home Improvement Fraud, four counts of Felony Theft, and two counts of Conspiracy Second Degree. He has not yet been apprehended and is currently wanted by the Delaware State Police. Anyone with information regarding the whereabouts of Theodore M. Forrest is asked to contact the Delaware State Police at (302) 856-5850, call 911, or contact Crimestoppers at (800) TIP-3333.

The Delaware Department of Justice and the Delaware State Police strongly urge anyone who feels they may have been victimized by these suspects, Henry Forrest and Theodore M. Forrest, to immediately contact the Delaware Department of Justice Consumer Protection Unit or the Delaware State Police. At the Department of Justice, please contact Special Investigator John Desmond at (302) 856-5353 ext. 108. At the Delaware State Police please contact Detective J.S. Evans of the Troop 4 Financial Crimes Unit at (302) 856-5850 ext. 214.

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